

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BOGOTA 004951

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/15/2014

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [SNAR](#) [KJUS](#) [CO](#) [OAS](#) [ELN](#)

SUBJECT: NEXT STEPS IN PARAMILITARY PEACE PROCESS

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood, reasons

1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: On May 14, Ambassador and Peace Commissioner Restrepo discussed the paramilitary peace agreement. The paramilitary leaders have a month to concentrate. Restrepo speculated they agreed after almost destroying the talks because: (1) the government had followed a consistent line and put forward a written, almost take-it-or-leave-it proposal, (2) they had been "startled" by recent tough public comments by the ambassador, (3) the elimination of Castano had increased their confidence they could hold together, and (4) they may be feeling the effects of government military and police efforts. Restrepo is pleased that paramilitary silence after the signing has allowed the government to spin the agreement, but worried that the signers may be having second thoughts. Paramilitary leaders remain resistant to concentrating their troops without a guarantee against jail time and extradition. Restrepo does not expect the draft "Law for Justice and Reparation," which provides for mandatory jail time, to be softened when it is considered during the congressional session that begins on July 20. Restrepo reiterated that extradition was not on the table and that the April 27 presidential declaration embodies GOC policy. End Summary.

-----  
Paramilitary Change of Heart?  
-----

2. (C) Carlos Castano's ouster from the peace process reflected a hardening of the paramilitary position and a strengthening of the narcotics trafficking influence. Why then did the ten commanders of the Central Bolivar Bloc (BCB) and United Self Defense Forces (AUC) agree on May 12 and 13 to concentrate in a 400 square km zone in Cordoba (map emailed to WHA/AND)? Restrepo speculated that several factors caused the change:

-- Castano was not only a source of tension among leaders; they also didn't trust him. With his elimination, they became more confident of their ability to stick together. From that stronger position, they could agree to Restrepo's concentration proposal.

-- The Ambassador's public comments in Semana magazine that (that the ouster of Castano revealed the paras to be nothing more than narco-terrorists, thieves and murderers with no claim to being treated as political actors) startled them.

-- The GOC has followed a tough, consistent line, solicited the May 12 meeting with the AUC/BCB and presented the written the concentration proposal on an almost take-it-or-leave-it basis. Restrepo commented that, although they have positions on issues, the para leaders had no coherent negotiating game plan.

-- Almost in passing, Restrepo also speculated that the paras might be feeling the effects of government military and police pressure. (Interestingly, during the conversation, Restrepo received a call from the Minister of Defense who wanted to make sure that a planned operation against an upper-mid level para/drug dealer would not overthrow the peace deal at this sensitive stage; Restrepo told him to launch the operation.)

3. (C) Restrepo said that Don Berna had eliminated four persons of importance to Castano that that Castano had, in return, killed someone close to Don Berna (presumably "Danilo"). This had precipitated the attack on Castano. Restrepo expressed the belief, but said he didn't have conclusive proof, that Castano was dead. He noted that Castano's disappearance relieved the BCB, which had feared Castano would give information to authorities about their drug trafficking activities.

-----  
Next Steps  
-----

4. (C) Concentration of leaders: The first step is concentration of leaders and bodyguards (estimated to be about 25 leaders and 400 persons in all). Restrepo said that there had been informal agreement that the commanders would concentrate within one month. In the meantime, Restrepo will

work with the security forces and the OAS to prepare the area. The GOC must demonstrate within the first few days of concentration that the paramilitaries will be completely prohibited from any illicit activities and held accountable for cease-fire violations. If not, the concentration zone risks becoming another FARC-like farce. He stressed that OAS verification will be crucial.

15. (C) Concentration/demobilization of cadre: Restrepo would like to concentrate/demobilize around 5,000 paramilitaries before the end of the year. Restrepo said that the paramilitary leaders continue to resist concentration of cadre until they receive written guarantees against jail time and extradition. Restrepo said that he would continue to refuse to negotiate, in spite of repeated efforts by the paramilitary leaders, the draft "Law for Justice and Reparation," which calls for mandatory jail time for anyone guilty of a serious, violent crime. Congress will review the bill during the session that begins on July 20. Although paramilitary supporters (lawyers, lobbyists, etc.) are seeking to soften the bill, Restrepo does not expect them to be successful. Castano stressed that concentrated leaders would still be fully under the legal jurisdiction of Colombia and, if the law were passed while they were concentrated, they would become immediately subject to it.

16. (C) Restrepo said that the para leaders continued to claim that the FARC will re-enter the areas they currently control if they demobilize and that they must have the freedom to defend those areas. In response to the ambassador's rejection of the idea that the paras play any positive role and assertion that the danger of vacuums was overestimated, Restrepo agreed that "the paras are not necessary." Restrepo has asked the para leaders for a map of areas they think the FARC might try to move into, both as a negotiating tactic and to provide information to the ministry of defense. In any event, Restrepo agreed with the ambassador that concentration zones for cadre must be small enough to remove any practical operational capability from the paras, whether against the FARC or anyone else.

-----  
No Change on Extradition  
-----

17. (C) In response to the ambassador's question, Restrepo reaffirmed the April 27 presidential declaration that extradition is not on the table and assured that no concessions of any kind had been made in this regard.

-----  
Comment  
-----

18. (C) Restrepo clearly is unable to completely explain the sudden change in direction of the para leaders; up to very recently he had thought that the talks were on the rocks. If we had to add an element to what he told us, it would be the presidential declaration of April 27, which amounted to an ultimatum to the paras and clearly ruled out extradition and jail time as subjects for negotiation. In our view, that may have been the key variable.

19. (C) But it is also clear that the para leaders are still in full negotiation mode. Getting them to actually concentrate will be a challenge, and getting their cadre to concentrate will be a bigger one. Then getting demobilization will be still harder.

110. (C) Embassy recommends that the Department, in its public statements and third-country diplomacy, emphasize the need for the paras to completely fulfill their promises: cessation of violence, concentration of leaders within a month, and concentration of cadre sometime after that.

111. (C) Embassy also notes Restrepo's emphasis on the OAS role. We agree. Embassy recommends that Department work to ensure adequate funding and staffing for the Caramagna effort here. Embassy is prepared to work closely with Washington agencies on the issue.

WOOD